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## Cross-border network of Caucasian mountain villages

(24.08.2006) Mountain communities in the Caucasus have adopted a memorandum aimed at establishing a cross-border community network modelled on the "Alliance in the Alps". The meeting was held in the mountain village of Chiora, Georgia, on 6 August as part of the mountain partnership project entitled Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions of the Caucasus – Local Agenda 21. The meeting was attended by representatives of eight mountain villages in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Russian Federation. As part of the mountain partnership project the eight villages have, over the past two years, drawn up development programmes for their communities based on the Local Agenda 21 model with the support of moderators and national consultants from the four states of the Caucasus; those programmes are now to be implemented. The programmes cover all areas of sustainable development and are designed first and foremost to tap the economic potential (mountain farming, tourism, traditional arts and crafts) for remote mountain regions neglected by their governments.

The community representatives came to the conclusion that their problems were very similar and that the cross-border exchange of experience would enable more effective solutions. They were inspired by the experiences of the Alliance in the Alps network of communities and from the Alliance of Central Asian Mountain Communities (AGOCA), which was also established in 2003 as the result of a mountain partnership with the Alps.

The project in the Caucasus has been promoted since 2004 by the Ministries for the Environment of Germany and Liechtenstein and co-ordinated by the Regional Environmental Centres for southern Caucasus (RECC) and Russia (RREC). The project intends both to contribute towards the sustainable development of these mountain regions and to stabilise the conflict-laden Caucasus region as part of the Environment and Safety agenda.

Source and information: German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety,

[http://www.rec-caucasus.org/news\\_eng.htm](http://www.rec-caucasus.org/news_eng.htm) (en),

[http://www.rec-caucasus.org/sd\\_pp\\_mount\\_obj\\_eng.htm](http://www.rec-caucasus.org/sd_pp_mount_obj_eng.htm) (en)

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## Alpine protected areas: a new international agency in Chambéry

(27.07.2006) The administration of the Network of Alpine Protected Areas (ALPARC) was transferred to the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention (AC) by the French government on 10 July 2006. At a ceremonial act in Chambéry Nelly Olin, the French Minister for Ecology and Sustainable Development, finalised the step, which had already been decided by the AC Ministerial Conference in 2004.

As part of the restructuring process the new ALPARC administration, or ALPARC Task Force, also moved in to new premises at the *Maison des Parcs et de la Montage* in Chambéry/F. Its duties include the implementation of international projects for the preservation of fauna, flora and alpine habitats, the promotion of regional products from protected areas as well as sustainable tourism involving local and regional projects. ALPARC has also been entrusted with setting up an integrated cross-border ecological system that allows the establishment of a continuous network of ecological corridors in the Alps. Its core is the existing network of Alpine protected areas, which was founded by France with the support of Slovenia in 1995. It combines more than 800 large protected areas in the Alps.

Sources and information: [www.alparc.org](http://www.alparc.org) (de/fr/it/sl/en),  
[http://www.mountains2b.com/211-Aktuelles\\_News\\_Alpenraum-e\\_45620,r\\_5292.htm](http://www.mountains2b.com/211-Aktuelles_News_Alpenraum-e_45620,r_5292.htm) (de)

## Sondrio is the 2007 Alpine Town of the Year

(10.08.2006) In August Sondrio/I was officially awarded the title of 2007 Alpine Town of the Year. The award pays tribute to Sondrio's commitment to enhancing the municipality's ecological, cultural and tourist status. Among the town's many initiatives the international jury picked out the project to preserve the terraced vineyards. In fact the terraced landscape is soon to be recognised by UNESCO as part of the World Heritage. Sondrio was elected on the strength of other initiatives such as the creation of a documentation centre on protected areas worldwide and the staging of a festival of nature documentaries for the past twenty years.

The title Alpine Town of the Year rewards alpine towns which put into practice in an exemplary fashion the international set of agreements of the Alpine Convention. Every year an international jury made up of representatives of the Alpine Towns Working Group, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA) and Pro Vita Alpina put forward an alpine town. Information: <http://www.alpenstaedte.org> (de/fr/it/sl/en)

Sondrio lies amidst the terraced vineyards of Valtellina.



© <http://www.cicloweb.net>

## New publication on the Eurovignette directive

(24.08.2006) The EU's revised Eurovignette directive, which is to harmonise the rules governing road tolls for lorries, has been in force since June 2006, and a new publication takes a detailed look at it. It examines which actual repercussions the directive will have and what sort of scope remains for national governments. Readers are given an overview of current road charging schemes in EU countries. The publication is aimed at policy makers, NGOs and other interest groups.

The report is published by the European Federation for Transport and Environment (T&E), which works to promote an environmentally sound approach to transport and mobility in Europe. T&E also criticises the fact that, with its directive, the EU appears less interested in reducing dust emissions and environmental pollution than increasing government revenue.

Bibliography: Liechti, M., Renshaw, N. (2006): A Price Worth Paying – A guide to the new EU rules for road tolls for lorries, T&E 06/1, 64 pages; to download the study: <http://www.transportenvironment.org/Article208.html> (en)

## New handbook on sustainable agriculture in the Alps

(07.09.2006) The new "Guidelines for promoting sustainable agriculture in Alpine mountain regions" in four languages (de/fr/it/en) contains numerous recommendations for the planning and implementation of projects and measures aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture in Alpine mountain regions. A new methodological approach is to ensure the involvement of all key players from a variety of sectors, with particular emphasis to be placed on the role of farmers in project development and in the project teams themselves. The selection of examples cited covers the huge diversity of alpine agriculture and its achievements for the (cultural) landscape, the high natural value of cultivated land and for rural regions worth living in. The handbook summarises the results of the research project "Implementation of sustainable agriculture and rural development in alpine mountains", which was concluded in June 2006 after a period of three years. It involved partners from France, Italy, Austria and Switzerland.

Information and download: <http://www.alpes-du-nord.com/imalp/handbook.html> (en)

## Ice-free Alps just a matter of decades?

(27.07.2006) A new study by the Glaciology and Geomorphodynamics Research Group led by glaciologist Michael Zemp of the Department of Geography at the University of Zurich/CH provides real figures on the past, present and potential future glacier cover in the Alps.

The study combines in-situ measurements, remote sensing techniques and numerical modelling for equilibrium line altitudes. As the findings show, Alpine glaciers lost 35% of their total area between 1850 and the 1970s, and almost 50% by 2000. Using numerical models the authors show that a 3 °C warming of summer air temperature by 2100 would reduce the current glacier cover by some 80%. In the event of a 5 °C increase, the Alps would become ice-free. Annual precipitations would have to increase by 25% to offset the consequences of an increase in summer temperatures of one degree on glacier cover.

Bibliography: Zemp, M. et al (2006) Alpine glaciers to disappear within decades? In Geophysical Research Letters, Vol. 33, <http://www.agu.org/pubs/crossref/2006/2006GL026319.shtml> (en)

Large glaciers still exist in the Alps.



© <http://www.gletscher.ch/>

## Conference publication with findings of the AlpWeek 2004

(07.09.2006) "The Alps of the Next Generation" was the theme of the AlpWeek 2004 held in Kranjska Gora/SI, a conference which looked at ways of finding solution approaches to current problems and staged a number of scientific discussions. It sought to build bridges between researchers, the population concerned and decision makers. The participants adopted a wide range of approaches to the key question as to how and in what condition the Alps would be handed over to the next generation.

The conference proceedings, which have now been published in English, document the findings with more than 80 abstracts of the lectures, poster presentations and workshops. The contributions focus on issues relating to future research and scenarios, aesthetic landscape evaluations and prospects for economic trends. Other studies look at issues of population trends or key factors for future landscape changes, the instrument of participation as a key factor of success in sustainable development, and the subject of mountain sports.

Download: <http://epub.oeaw.ac.at/alpweek2004> (en)

## King Albert Mountain Award goes to Werner Bätzing

(07.09.2006) Last week the King Albert I Memorial Foundation honoured seven mountain experts with golden awards. One of the Awards went to Germany's Werner Bätzing as a "leading expert on problems of the Alps as a whole". The same Award was also conferred to Swiss authors Ursula Bauer and Jürg Frischknecht for their hiking books, and to the Swiss-Vorarlberg mountaineer, author and expert in high-altitude medicine Oswald Oelz. Gold Medals were also awarded to Indian Himalaya explorer Harish Kapadia and to mountain guides Bernadette McDonald and Leslie Taylor of the Mountain Culture at the Banff Centre in Canada.

The King Albert I Memorial Foundation is a foundation registered in Zurich/CH and was founded in 1993 by the former Director of the Tourist Office of St. Moritz, Walter Amstutz, in honour of King Albert I of Belgium (1875-1934), himself a keen and accomplished mountaineer. The Foundation honours accomplishments of lasting value achieved by individuals and institutions in fields linked to the mountain world. The King Albert Mountain Award is conferred every two years in the Engadine.

Source: <http://www.king-albert.ch> (en)

## Tyrol under a cloud

(10.08.2006) The Ministry of the Environment in Vienna/A has earmarked more areas of Tyrol as rehabilitation areas due to high levels of air pollution. In the space of two years the size of the rehabilitation area has tripled to 3,000 hectares. Due to excessively high readings for particulate matter 32 additional municipalities have been included in the register of rehabilitation areas. Besides the particulate matter readings the concentration of nitrogen dioxide is also increasingly problematic. It affects for instance the town of Innsbruck as well as parts of the Oberland as far as Landeck. More than 400,000 inhabitants of the Tyrol now live in areas declared as air rehabilitation areas.

While the Federal Province of Tyrol is obliged to take measures against these levels of air pollution, the measures themselves appear to have had little or no effect so far. Fritz Gurgiser of the *Transitforum Austria-Tirol* deplors that the Province has been far too reluctant to adopt traffic-curbing measures.

Source: <http://www.tirol.com/politik/innsbruck/41683/index.do> (de)

## Miscellaneous

### Delimitation of the Carpathian Convention area – Pilot study

(07.09.2006) The European Academy in Bolzano/I recently published a pilot study in English on implementing international mountain conventions. Based on the experiences with the delimitation of the Alpine Convention, scientists have drawn up an exemplary methodology on how the area of the Carpathian Convention could be delimited.

Bibliography: Ruffini F.V.; Streifeneder, T.; Eiselt, B. (2006) Implementing an international mountain convention. An approach for the delimitation of the Carpathian Convention area. Bolzano, EURAC research. 118 pages. ISBN 88-88906-20-7, Information: <http://www.eurac.edu/Press/Publications/Monographs/0057650.htm> (en)

### Switzerland: NEAT costs have doubled

(27.07.2006) More than 600 participants from all over Europe recently convened in Lucerne/CH for this year's Swiss Tunnel Congress to find out more about the state of progress with the New Alps Transversal Route, or Neat. While all the track has now been laid in the Lötschberg Base Tunnel, around 65% of the Gotthard Tunnel is excavated. But once again the costs were a subject of discussion. In 2000 the Neat supervisory delegation anticipated final costs for the two main Neat works of around CHF 11 bn, price rises included. The 2005 Report estimates that by the end of the project the Neat will now return effective costs of around CHF 22 bn.

Source: <http://www.nzz.ch/2006/07/13/il/articleE9Z2G.html> (de)

### New publication: *Alps : points of view*

(24.08.2006) A new illustrated book documents the different views of local populations on life in the Alps. The publication in three languages (de/it/en) is the result of the AlpConFoto photo competition, which was designed to publicise to a broader section of the population the objectives of the Alpine Convention and in particular the work achieved in the area of "Population and Culture". The competition was staged by the European Academy in Bolzano/I.

Bibliography: Ruffini, F. V., Giulietti, S., Schirpke, U. (publishers) 2006: *Alps : points of view*. Bolzano. ISBN 88-88906-19-3. 73 pages

## Agenda

Europarc 2006 Conference: **Living Working Landscapes**; 20.-24.09.2006, Oxford/GB; conference languages: English, German, French; organisers: Europarc; Information: <http://www.tcp-events.co.uk/europarc2006/index.html> (de/fr/en)

4. Salzburger Verkehrstage: **More Courage for Train & Bus – Public Transport DOES Pay**; 28-29.09.2006, Salzburg/A; symposium languages: German, English; organisers: Regionale Schienen, Pro Bahn Österreich; Information: [http://www.salzburger-verkehrstage.org/vt4\\_de.html](http://www.salzburger-verkehrstage.org/vt4_de.html) (de/en)

Study travel: **Alpine Protected Areas and Ecological Construction**; 2-6.10.2006, eastern Switzerland and Vorarlberg/A; languages: German, French, Italian, Slovenian; organisers: Alparc, CIPRA International; Information: <http://www.alparc.org> (de/fr/it/sl/en)

Wengen Workshop 2006: **Adaptation to the Impacts of Climatic Change in the European Alps**; 4-6.10.2006, Wengen/CH; conference language: English; organisers: OECD, Universities of Geneva and Fribourg, EU-ENSEMBLES Project; Information: <http://www.unifr.ch/geosciences/geographie/EVENTS/Wengen/06/Wengen2006.html> (en)

XVI Malente Symposium (on Securing Energy and Climate Change): **Energy, Climate, and Future Welfare – Changing Global Dynamics**; 08.-10.10.2006, Lübeck/D; conference languages: German, English; organisers: Dräger Foundation, Kiel Institute for the World Economy; Information: <http://www.draeger-stiftung.de> (de/en)

International Symposium for Sustainable Mountain Development: **Role of Local Authorities in Natural Resource Management in Mountain Areas**; 11-15.10.2006, Maseru/Lesotho; conference language: English; organisers: GTZ, FAO, World Bank, National University of Lesotho; Information: [kirsten.roettcher@gtz.de](mailto:kirsten.roettcher@gtz.de)

### Oh!

...July's heat wave caused the glaciers to melt. So what do you do when prominent ski racers eager to train find themselves in front of locked gates at local glaciers? Well, the German women's slalom team decided to fly out to Dubai. The world's largest indoor ski venue with around 400 m of piste and a height difference of 120 m obviously provides an excellent alternative. Hermann Maier & Co. tackled the problem in an even more subtle way. They simply packed up 100 racers and assistants and just under 30 tonnes of equipment in the form of 1,000 pairs of skis and three snow guns (weighing a tonne each), and flew off to New Zealand. "The conditions are perfect," radioed Maier from the other side of the world.

Source: *heute* No. 56, 03.08.2006